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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000357

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DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR DAAG/CRM SWARTZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2028

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: DPM CICEK,S HARSH RHETORIC SETS BACK CT  
COOPERATION WITH BELGIUM

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner. Reasons: 1.4 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) Summary. In separate February 19 meetings with the Belgian Ministers of Justice and the Interior, Turkey's DPM Cemil Cicek used very blunt language to insist that Belgium crack down on terrorism, according to both Turkish MFA and Belgian Embassy sources. Cicek implied Belgium should not allow the separation of the judiciary and executive to hinder necessary actions. Cicek's message and harsh tone reportedly caused the Belgian Interior Minister to threaten to report the incident to his Prime Minister. Belgian DCM Vantieghem fears Cicek's actions have set back efforts for closer bilateral CT cooperation; MFA acknowledged relations would suffer. End summary.

¶2. (C) Intemperate remarks to Belgian officials by Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Counterterrorism Board Cemil Cicek have set back bilateral relations, MFA Deputy Department Head Ceren Etiz told us February 22. Cicek, a prominent AKP member and former Minister of Justice, was in Brussels February 19 to address the East-West Institute on "Enhancing International Cooperation Against Terrorism." (Note: By coincidence, inaugural Turkey-EU Troika CT talks were held in Brussels that same day.) Before leaving Ankara, Cicek had questioned whether he should have bilateral discussions with the Belgians due to Turkey's displeasure over a recent Antwerp Appellate Court ruling in favor of Turkish terrorist group DHKP-C defendants. In the end, MFA urged Cicek to meet with the Belgian Ministers of Justice and the Interior.

¶3. (C) Those talks, Etiz continued, were "brutal," based on what she learned from the MOI meeting cable and more informal verbal reports. Cicek minced no words in telling the Belgians that while he recognized the division between the judiciary and the government, the Belgians needed to implement their international legal obligations and "do more" against the PKK and other terrorists. Etiz insisted Cicek's message was no different than that delivered by Turkish representatives in many diplomatic fora, but admitted that Cicek's tone and choice of words were blunt. The discussion reportedly became so heated that the Belgian Minister of the Interior threatened to report the matter to his Prime Minister. Etiz acknowledged with bemused understatement that the exchange would likely dampen bilateral relations "for a bit."

¶4. (C) In a separate February 22 conversation, Belgian Charge Henri Vantieghem corroborated the confrontational tone of Cicek's approach toward the Belgians, though he had seen only the report from Cicek's meeting with the Minister of Justice.

Cicek had used "very strong language" and the conversation had "not gone well." Vantieghem paraphrased Cicek as saying he understood the separation of judicial powers and government authority, but the government needed to "crack down on terrorists anyway." Vantieghem was clearly discouraged by the report on Cicek's MOJ meeting. He had been working hard to persuade Belgium's MOJ to engage bilaterally with its Turkish counterparts. He feared Cicek's intemperate message would significantly set back his efforts.

#### Turkish Skepticism of Belgian Actions Remains

¶5. (C) Asked about press reports that Belgian Finance Ministry authorities had fined ROJ-TV for four million Euros, Etiz said that the MFA was still looking into it. She was suspicious because only the Turkish and PKK media had reported the incident. The Belgian investigation and subsequent fine of ROJ-TV might have been the result of a number of inquiries about the station's operations in Brussels sent by Turkey through its FIU. Or, she speculated, the fine could be related to Belgian efforts to reopen the "Sputnik" case involving ROJ-TV's predecessor, MED-TV. That case, which involved money laundering, drug smuggling and illegal immigrants, among other alleged crimes, yielded no results because the statute of limitations ran in 2007. Separately, Etiz acknowledged that the announcement by Belgium's Federal Prosecutor Delmulle that he would appeal the recent DHKP-C verdict of the Antwerp Appellate Court to the Supreme Court was a positive move. Nonetheless, Turkey

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would continue its active "campaign" against the Antwerp decision.

#### Comment

¶6. (C) DPM Cicek, a hardliner and frequent attack dog for the GOT, was likely still angry over the Antwerp Appellate Court's decision when he met his Belgian counterparts. Nonetheless, his insensitivity regarding the independence of judicial authority and his blunt language were counterproductive. His outbursts reinforced negative images of Turkey that many on both sides have been working hard to overcome. It will now take even greater effort to get this bilateral process back on track.

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